
The Papua New Guinea - Mama Graun Tribal Charter:



For a Sustainable Future

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is a party to the Earth Charter, which is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st Century. It is also a signatory to other global Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) protocols.

PNG's ecology is made up of islands, mountains, rivers, ocean, reefs, tropical forests, and wetlands. The main island has a rugged mountain range which runs down its middle, while most of the islands are high volcanic land areas. The coastline is predominantly made up of a narrow strip of fringing reefs and a small barrier reef system surrounding the Eastern islands in Milne Bay area and the New Guinea Islands region. PNG's tropical forest is one of the few remaining original tracts of rainforest left on earth. This has been subjected to uncontrolled harvesting by wholesale logging operators.

The high mountain range of the main island contains minerals and hydrocarbon, which are extensively mined, and the waste from these operations have been dumped into the rivers and soaked up by the wetlands on either of the range. This is where the bulk of PNG's population live.

PNG's fringing and barrier reef systems have been heavily fished out for commercial gain and subsistence use, while the outer islands have been subjected to heavy commercial logging and shifting agriculture. Global warming is affecting the outer lying low atolls while the Government's environmental management regime is by and large still weak by international standards.

Our 870 plus tribes begin their daily life cycles at sunrise and allow it to come to a natural close well after sunset. They have lived in this sustainable, spiritually balanced and peaceful manner for generations. These common denominators have bonded PNG's people into a single tribe to all intents and purposes.

With PNG's emergence and acceptance into the global village; PNG as a tribe now belongs to a new sense of global interde-

pendencies and shared responsibility for the well being of the human family and a peaceful, sustainable and spiritually functional planet.

PNG's Mama Graun Charter is a description and manifestation of historical and natural challenges faced by her 870 tribes and how these are dovetailing into those faced by all tribes globally. It emphasize and calls for a vision on environmental integrity sustainability; protection of human rights and equitable human development. It has been compiled from a series of public stakeholder consultations and essays by a group of concerned civil society commentators.

It spells out some fundamental suggestions for how tribes could forge partnerships with stakeholders to develop and use sustainable means, peaceful and equitable practices to manage their resources for their long - term survival.

The objectives of PNG's Mama Graun tribal charter are:

- (i) **To encourage the use and allocation of natural resources in a just, and environmentally friendly manner for the benefit of the present and future generations;**
- (ii) **To share and disseminate the charter to individuals and organisations with similar missions globally**
- (iii) **To depict, promote and enhance its educational and awareness use in communities, schools, universities, faith communities and other sectors of society in PNG.**
- (iv) **To enable all sectors of PNG to develop and distribute necessary supporting materials to promote and practice its principles.**

(v) **To actively encourage endorsement, implementation and support of the charter by civil society, private enterprise and government at all levels.**

(vi) **To seek endorsement of this charter from the Government prior to its tabling to the civil society RIO +10 Summit in Johannesburg South Africa in September 2002.**



Values and Principles for a Sustainable PNG.

Over a six-month period, individuals and organisations were invited to present their visions for the future of this country. The following statement attempts to contain the essence of over 100 individual submissions from the people of Papua New Guinea. While it was impossible to use all of the insightful and inspirational contributions, representative statements are used here as a foundation for our clarion calls and visions for the future of Papua New Guinea tribal life.

I. RESPECT AND CARE FOR THE COMMUNITY OF LIFE:

Ø Land is the most precious gift in PNG. The livelihood of the 70-80% of people depends on their surrounding environment. They find food, medicine, divine presence and most importantly a strong feeling of being attached to the land. Land destruction and / or unwise usage by developers without respect is like “switching off a life- support system on a patient”

Because of this:

We therefore call for the respect for mother earth and recognize that all living things depend on each other for survival no matter how valuable or invaluable they are to man.

We call for the Government to recognise and protect residual land rights and to throw away any intentions it may have for the registration of customary land.

Ø An 87-year-old lady from Milne Province in PNG has this say about her garden and what it really means to her. Quoting her words of wisdom in her native language “Inapwana sinasinapu ie ebwaeda be ta ita ii’ sidi kaiwe mitaya ta wate ida yobai yao ola ta mitawaya edia si miyami be enega natudao tuta sime mai enaya, taudi wate si muliei toase batua ta guinuena manudi asa ana ita ita manuna”

Translated into English “God has given us the wisdom to protect our forests and marine life. And in doing so, our children in the future will follow the same example to wisely protect and care for their environment for their future use”. Given these words of wisdom:

We call for all sectors of society to care for and maintain the natural linkages between the land, spirits and living things to secure the earth’s resources for the present and future generations of PNG.

We also call on the Government to recognize that tribes own their land and everything that is on and in it, and that this includes the

right and duty to sustainably manage resources and prevent environmental harm to them.

We ask that the Government also recognize that all tribes have rights and that they be allowed to practice these rights to do things that are socially and economically fair and just for their common good.

ECOLOGICAL INTERGRITY:

PNG has some of the world’s endemic species of flora and fauna, and its diverse habitats and ecosystems from ocean to the mountain tops provide vast niches for diversity of plant and animal life. The fishes and the corals of the rivers and oceans, the tress and plants of the forests, the birds and animals of the coastal plains, grasslands, highlands and other terrestrial ecosystems have become important life support systems for the majority of the people of PNG who have rural lifestyles.

As this paints a compelling disastrous picture for the future it is imperative and incumbent on us to call for the following:

We reiterate and call for the Government to restore and protect PNG’s ecological systems and the natural wealth they contain through enactment and enforcement of sound environmental safeguards.

We call for the Government and tribes to become partners in developing, establishing and practicing sustainable management policies, regulations and strategies to rehabilitate the damaged ecology and to integrate these into development plans.

We call for the establishment of a renewable management commission or institute such as a National Conservation Council to control and monitor the management of renewable resources such as water, soil, forest products and marine resources to ensure that their use is not exceeded by the rate of their natural replenishment

We call for the Government to legislate enforcement mechanisms for the Conventions on Biological Diversity and Climate Change.

Ø Food security has to be defined within the PNG’s cultural context. The culture of PNG’s agriculture provides the essential element and strength to sustainably continue this tradition while taking on contributions from agricultural science to further heights of farming. Increased food supplies can be achieved through protection and reducing losses of our traditional food crops and animals. We must identify traditional food species that are suitable for mass production and using the modern techniques of plant hybridization, genetic engineering and crop husbandry so that we can improve crop yield and food security.

Ø Water is a commodity that is taken for granted in PNG, as it

appears to be found in abundance in areas where most of PNG's tribes live. For the outer lying islands, it is quickly becoming a scarce commodity as the level of salinity is rising due to the rising sea level while in the higher regions it is difficult to fetch and store drinking water. During the El Nino in the mid 1990's, some tribes found it difficult to locate safe drinking water in the highlands and particularly in the outer lying islands. They had to drink brackish and unsafe water. Water-borne diseases are now becoming common as more and more of our streams are becoming contaminated with toxic materials and human waste.

- Ø For hundreds of years our people have sourced their food and water from traditional sources in the sea and on land. As our population rapidly grows, it is placing a strain on these sources; we must now protect and conserve these sources and the food and water they contain.

For these reasons, we need to take urgent and drastic measures including:

We call on the tribes and Government to establish and protect viable natural biosphere reserves including uninhabited and marine areas to protect PNG's life support systems such as water and food.

We call on the tribes and Government to also regulate, monitor and sustainably manage the extraction and use of non-renewable resources such as minerals and fossil fuels to minimize their depletion and safeguard the health of their ecology.

We urge the tribes and Government to establish, formulate, and support food security programs to store and maintain the genetic diversity and integrity of native foods and prevent the introduction of genetically engineered food sources.

We call on concerned private enterprise and Government to rehabilitate or compensate tribal owners for the permanent environmental damage caused through mining and logging on damaged lands, crops, food and poisoned water ways and drinking water systems.

III. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE:

- Ø There is now little doubt that there is gradual achievement by women of a more clearly defined profile in PNG society. Women now have access to education and training. There is now more of the sharing of responsibilities of bringing up and educating children. More men are beginning to value the



need for educated wives with some men opting to be "house husbands" while their wives work to earn income. In addition, the hospitality industry, which in PNG is traditionally a job women do, is seeing the increase of male workers.

- Ø Unless the roles of the public servants are clearly defined, the public cannot be misled by public servants. Many public services have been denied because public servants do not know what they are doing. How can public servants build a healthy nation by not knowing what the underlying role is?

- Ø As long as global institutions and national governments simultaneously attempt to pursue economic globalization, no goals for a healthy planet, or equity and justice for people, are remotely achievable. Globalization, trade and investment designs and structures reinforce a model of development- centered on free trade, hyper economic growth and export- oriented production-, which is inherently unsustainable in ecological and social terms. They also destroy viable localized and regional systems that may have the greatest long- term promise for future sustainability.

With over 870 tribes and 800 different language groups the cultural heritage of our people is the most diverse and unique in the world. We therefore call for the Government to recognise this and put in place a legislative mechanism to protect the cultural heritage of our people.

We call upon the Papua New Guinean State to have the courage to resist the impositions of the international community, to ask that the forces of Globalisation enter the country on our terms, and our terms alone, and that if necessary we see a path to walk confidently into the future that is

different from that of the herd.

IV. DEMOCRACY, NON VIOLENCE, AND PEACE

PNG constitution declares for freedom of expression by its citizens and the right for equality amongst all including man and women. However, regardless of some good legislation that uphold this constitutional statements, there are yet dictatorial leadership roles exercised, there are yet law and order problems occurring, there is yet violence amongst the people and families.

Unless there are established institutions that educate and promote anti-corruption in the country, corruption will continually exist, in-fighting amongst haves and have nots will continue and the rich will get richer and the poor gets poorer. The laws need to be guided to avoid corrupt deals and protect the general public so that wealth distribution is fair.

Every human individual, plant or animal needs to be respect and considered important. Best methods should be promoted to avoid destruction for all. Institutional capacity strengthening for organisations that

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promote human rights should be given priority for democracy non-violence and peace to prevail.

We call on the Government to develop a long-term strategy to prevent violent conflict and encourage alternative dispute settlement mechanisms to resolve environmental conflicts and other disputes.

We call for the recognition that all tribes have rights and that they be allowed to practice these rights to do things that are socially and economically fair and just for their common good.

Papua New Guinea is a democratic country and our Constitution declares that that men and women alike have the right to express themselves and that everyone is equal. However this has not been case since the country gained independence with gap between the rich and poor increases.

No matter what one's station in life is he or she is still a separate and distinct being and entitled to a voice in government and respect by society.

Public decision-making must be a give-and-take process to find the position most acceptable to the largest number of citizens.

That the government must work carefully to instigate a proper balance between the rights of the individual and the authority of the government.

The right for citizens to receive clear and timely information on environmental matters and all development plans and activities, which are likely to affect them, or in which they have an interest.

Protection from the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly, association and dissent.

Eliminate corruption in all public and private institutions.

V. SPIRITUALITY

It is a common belief among the majority of our people that the spirits of their ancestors still roam the forest and live in sacred places and sites on their traditional land

Blessed with 870 tribes, each one of them unique in its own way, these cultures have various beliefs, which have been passed on from generation to generation. With the arrival of new beliefs these cultures have taken the back seat. We therefore call on the government to recognize and help promote these dying cultures.;

We call for the government to recognise, protect and restore sacred

sites of our cultural and spiritual significance.

We call on the government to recognise and honor the rights of individuals, groups and religious denominations in practicing their spirituality consistent with these local cultures and traditions.

VI. THE WAY FORWARD



PNG is at a critical cross road at this point in it's geo political development. She needs to develop a vision with a new beginning that will sustainably manage the lives of her 870 plus tribal groups to enable them to live like others who have adopted the Earth Charter principles.

This requires a change in the mindset and hearts of all concerned. It has therefore become imperative for the tribes to see themselves as part of a new sense of interdependence and universal responsibility. This new vision must start from the tribes themselves and involve all citizens. It must be a shared vision of a sustainable way of life locally, nationally, regionally and globally. The Mama Graun Tribal Charter has been developed with this global vision in mind and links PNG's tribes to other tribes on earth.

Our cultural heritage is rich and precious and with the many common denominators, such as the right to life and own land; it would be easy for our many varied cultures to adopt and apply this new beginning. We must play a part to deepen, expand and apply the ongoing global consensus building regarding the Earth Charter.

The sustainability of our tribes will involve balancing the deeply entrenched values of all sectors of our society. Inevitably this will mean having to make difficult choices; but our common denominators will enable us to balance short-term goals with a long-term vision. This will require the collective vision and action of each individual, family, tribe, community and Government.

It will also require a high level of visionary stewardship and partnership from the media, NGOs, religious institutions, business and Government.

PNG's tribes need to therefore subscribe to the global awakening instigated by the UN Charter to build a sustainable universal community. We must subscribe to and fulfil our obligations to this charter, and international protocols already in place which concern the health of the environment and development.

At this cross road; those of us who have the opportunity now should make it our individual and collective business to create a sustainable future for those yet to come. They will remember us for caring for their future and we owe them a sustainable, peaceful and harmonious existence. It's the least we could do for them.

This Charter is an initiative of Papua New Guinea's Civil Society for building a just, sustainable and peaceful, society in the 21st Century and is in accordance with Agenda 21, the global plan of action for sustainable development.

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